

THE
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REPORT
OF THE
GENERAL OFFICERS,

APPOINTED

By his MAJESTY's Warrant of the First of November 1757, to inquire into the Causes of the Failure of the late Expedition to the Coasts of FRANCE.

To which is prefixed,

A Copy of his MAJESTY's Warrant directing the said Inquiry.

WITH

An APPENDIX, containing the Papers referred to in the said Report.

By Spencer of Marlborough,

Published by Authority.

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GEORGE R.

WHEREAS we were pleased, in *August* last, to send a Number of our Troops on an Expedition against *France*, with Orders and Instructions to attempt, as far as should be found practicable, a Descent on the *French* Coast at or near *Rocheſtort*, in order to attack, if practicable, and by a vigorous Impression force that Place; and to burn and destroy, to the utmost of their Power, all Docks, Magazines, Arſenals, and Shipping, that should be found there; and to exert such other Efforts, as should be judged most proper for annoying the Enemy, as by our ſeveral Instructions to the Commander of our ſaid Forces does more fully appear: And whereas the Troops ſent for these Purpoſes are returned to *Great Britain*, no Attempt having been made to land on the Coast of *France*; concerning the Caufes of which Failure we think it neceſſary that Enquiry ſhould be made by the General Officers herein after named, in order that they may report those Caufes to us, for our better Information: Our Will and Pleaſure therefore is, and we do hereby nominate and appoint our right Trusty and right entirely beloved Couſin and Counſellor *Charles Duke of Marlborough* Lieutenant General, our Trusty and well beloved *George Sackville*, commonly called Lord *George Sackville*, and *John Valdegrave*, Major Generals of our Forces, to

examine and enquire touching the Matters aforesaid. And you are to give Notice to the said General Officers, when and where they are to meet for the said Examination. And the said General Officers are hereby directed to cause you to summon such Persons (whether the Generals or other Officers employed in the Expedition, or others) as are necessary to give Information touching the said Matters, or as shall be desired by those, who were employed in the Expedition: And the said General Officers are hereby farther directed to hear such Persons as shall offer to give them Information touching the same; and they are authorized, empowered, and required, strictly to examine into the Matters before mentioned, and to report a State thereof, as it shall appear to them, together with their Opinion thereon. All which you are to transmit to our Secretary at War, to be by him laid before us for our Consideration. And for so doing this shall be, as well to you, as to our said General Officers and all others concerned, a sufficient Warrant. Given at our Court at *Kensington* this First Day of *November* 1757, in the Thirty First Year of our Reign.

By his MAJESTY's Command,

BARRINGTON.

To our Trusty and well beloved
Thomas Morgan, Esq; Judge
 Advocate General of our For-
 ces, or his Deputy.

MINUTES
OF THE
PROCEEDINGS
OF THE
GENERAL OFFICERS, &c.
As annexed to their REPORT.

AT a Meeting of the General Officers appointed to inquire into the Causes of the Failure of the late Expedition to the Coast of France, at the Judge Advocate General's Office in *Privy Garden*, on *Saturday the 12th of November, 1757, viz.*

Lieutenant General, His Grace the Duke of *Marlborough*.

Major General, Right Honourable Lord *George Sackville*.

Major General, Honourable *John Waldegrave*.

The General Officers employed in the Expedition, *viz.* Sir *John Mordaunt*, Lieutenant General (who had the principal Command) and Majors General *Conway* and *Cornwallis* being called in, and all Persons who were desirous being admitted, his Majesty's Warrant directing this Inquiry was publickly read.

Read also the several Papers transmitted to the Judge Advocate from Mr. Secretary *Pitt*, and two Orders transmitted from the Admiralty in consequence of an Application from the General Officers appointed to make this Inquiry, *viz.*

1. Copy of a Letter, dated *London 15th July, 1757*, from Captain (now Lieutenant Colonel) *Clerk*,

to Sir John Ligonier, and transmitted to Mr. Secretary Pitt, with regard to Rochefort.

2. Minute, dated *Arlington Street, August 1757*, containing an Examination of a French Pilot.

3. *Mémoire sur la Force actuelle de la France, et les Services auxquels elle est employée dans l'Année 1757*—received *July 28, 1757*, and communicated, at a Meeting at Lord Holderness's House, to the Generals appointed on an Expedition to the Coasts of France.

4. Copy of his Majesty's secret Instructions to Sir Edward Hawke, dated *August 5, 1757*.

5. Copy of his Majesty's secret Instructions to Sir John Mordaunt, dated *August 5, 1757*.

6. Copy of a Letter from Mr. Secretary Pitt to Sir Edward Hawke, dated *August 5, 1757*.

7. Copy of a Letter from Mr. Secretary Pitt to Major General Conway, Major General Cornwallis, Vice Admiral Knowles, and Rear Admiral Brodrick, dated *August 5, 1757*.

8. Copy of a Letter from Sir Edward Hawke to Mr. Secretary Pitt, dated *Spithead, August 7, 1757*.

9. Copy of a Letter from Major General Cornwallis to Mr. Secretary Pitt, dated *Newport, Isle of Wight, August 6, 1757*.

10. Copy of a Letter from Vice Admiral Knowles to Mr. Secretary Pitt, dated *Portsmouth, August 6, 1757*.

11. Copy of a Letter from Rear Admiral Brodrick to Mr. Secretary Pitt, dated *Portsmouth, August 6, 1757*.

12. Copy of an Order from the Lords of the Admiralty to Sir Edward Hawke, dated *August 5, 1757*.

13. Copy of an Order from the Lords of the Admiralty to Sir Edward Hawke, dated *August 6, 1757*.

14. Copy of a Letter from Sir John Mordaunt to Mr. Secretary Pitt, dated *Isle of Wight, August 11, 1757*, Ten at Night.

15. Copy of a Letter from Mr. Secretary Pitt, to Sir John Mordaunt, dated *August 13, 1757*.

16. Copy

16. Copy of a Letter from Sir John Mordaunt to Mr. Secretary Pitt, dated Head Quarters, Newport, August 20, 1757. Inclosing,

17. Copy of a Letter from Sir John Mordaunt to Thomas Orby Hunter, and Gilbert Elliott, Esqrs. dated August 17, 1757.

18. Copy of a Letter from Mr. Secretary Pitt to Sir Edward Hawke, dated August 23, 1757.

19. Copy of a Letter from Mr. Secretary Pitt to Sir John Mordaunt, dated August 23, 1757. Inclosing,

20. Copy of a Letter from Mr. Cleveland to Sir Edward Hawke, dated August 19, 1757;

21. Copy of a Letter from Mr. Cleveland to Sir Edward Hawke, dated August 20, 1757;

22. Copy of a Letter from Mr. Cleveland to Mr. Cockburne, dated August 21, 1757;

23. Copy of a Letter from Mr. Cockburne to Mr. Cleveland, dated August 23, 1757.

24. Copy of a Letter from Sir Edward Hawke to Mr. Secretary Pitt, dated Portsmouth, August 25, 1757.

25. Copy of a Letter from Mr. Secretary Pitt to Sir Edward Hawke and Sir John Mordaunt, dated September 5, 1757, Four o'Clock in the Afternoon.

26. Copy of a Letter from Sir Edward Hawke to Mr. Secretary Pitt, dated Ramilles at Spithead, September 6, 1757.

27. Copy of a Letter from Sir John Mordaunt to Mr. Secretary Pitt, dated Portsmouth, September 6, Nine at Night.

28. Copy of a Letter from Sir Edward Hawke to Mr. Secretary Pitt, dated Ramilles at St. Helens, September 8, 1757.

29. Copy of a Letter from Sir Edward Hawke to Mr. Secretary Pitt, dated Ramilles at Sea, September 10, 1757.

30. Copy of a Letter from Mr. Secretary Pitt to Sir Edward Hawke and Sir John Mordaunt, dated September 15, 1757, by the Viper Sloop.

The above Papers containing all the Orders and Instructions which appear to have been signified to the Commanders of the late Expedition, it was publickly asked, Whether any Person had any Information to offer, tending to shew the Causes, why the said Orders were not carried into execution, or why the Expedition has failed?—And any such Person, being present, was desired then to declare the same, in order to his withdrawing for the present, with Assurance, that he should, in convenient Time, be fully heard: And no Person offering himself,

Ordered, That all Persons summoned as Witnesses, do withdraw into a Room appointed for that Purpose, until called for, in order to their being examined separately.

Then proceeded to read other of the Papers received from Mr. Secretary Pitt's Office, *viz.*

31. Copy of a Letter from Sir Edward Hawke to Mr. Secretary Pitt, dated *Ramilles* in *Basque Road*, *September 30, 1757*. Inclosing,

32. Copy of a Report made to Sir Edward Hawke on board the *Ramilles*, *September 24, 1757*, by Rear Admiral Brodrick and others;

33. Copy of a Council of War held on board the *Neptune*, *September 25, 1757*; the same as the Original delivered by Sir John Mordaunt, soon after his Arrival, to Mr. Secretary Pitt;

34. Copy of a Council of War held on board the *Ramilles*, *September 28, 1757*; the same as the Original delivered by Sir John Mordaunt, soon after his Arrival, to Mr. Secretary Pitt;

35. Copy of a Letter from Rear Admiral Brodrick to Sir Edward Hawke, dated *Achilles*, *Tuesday Morning*, One in the Morning;

36. Copy of a Letter from Sir John Mordaunt to Sir Edward Hawke, dated *Ramilles*, *Thursday Evening*, *September 29, 1757*.

37. Copy of a Letter from Sir John Mordaunt to Mr. Secretary Pitt, dated *Ramilles*, *Rade de Basque*, *September 30, 1757*.

38. A Paper purporting to be Minutes of a Council of War assembled on board his Majesty's Ship *Ramilles* in *Basque Road*, the 28th of September, 1757, and appearing by the Indorsement to have been delivered by Sir *John Mordaunt*, soon after his Arrival, to Mr. Secretary *Pitt*, being about to be read,

Sir *John Mordaunt* said, That he did not mean to object to the reading of the said Paper, but begged leave to observe, that the Minutes now produced, were taken down without the Knowledge of the Persons, who composed the said Council of War, and never seen by the Gentlemen, whose Names are thereunder written; and that the first Knowledge he (Sir *John Mordaunt*) had of them, was from a Copy delivered to him by Sir *Edward Hawke*'s Secretary, Mr. *Hay*, after his Arrival at *Portsmouth*. That upon seeing them, he attempted to prevent Sir *Edward Hawke*'s sending them up to *London*; but his Application was too late. Sir *John Mordaunt* added, That some little Time after his Arrival in *London*, understanding that he ought, as Commander in Chief of the Land Forces, to deliver Copies of the Councils of War, and any other material Papers, to Mr. *Pitt*, his Majesty's Secretary of State, in like Manner as Sir *Edward Hawke* had done, as Commander of the Fleet, he did so, and delivered the said Copy of Minutes received from Sir *Edward Hawke*'s Secretary among the rest.

Sir *John Mordaunt* being askt, Whether at the Time of his delivering a Copy of these Minutes to Mr. *Pitt*, he observed to him, that they were not authentick?

Answered, He does not recollect, that he did.

Then the said Minutes were read, in Presence of the several Persons hereafter-mentioned, Members of the said Council of War, who were severally called upon for their Information, Whether the said Minutes are authentick, and taken down with their Privity? *viz.*

1. Vice Admiral *Charles Knowles*, who disavowed these Minutes intirely, saying that he never saw them,

until they were shewn to him after his Arrival in *London*.

2. Rear Admiral *Thomas Brodrick*, who said, that he did observe Minutes taken, and remembers he objected to it, but never saw these Minutes; and mention being therein made of Sir *John Mordaunt*'s retiring with him (Rear Admiral *Brodrick*) and others, observes that he remembers Sir *Edward Hawke*, Vice Admiral *Knowles*, and himself retiring, but does not recollect Sir *John Mordaunt*'s going out with them.

— He further says, that he, at the Desire of Sir *John Mordaunt*, went off to Admiral Sir *Edward Hawke* at *Spithead*, in Hopes of preventing these Minutes being sent up to *London*, but that unluckily they were sent away before he reached the Admiral.

3. Major General *Conway*, who says, that to the best of his Memory, these Minutes were never communicated to him, and knows it was agreed upon not to have any Minutes taken.

4. Major General *Edward Cornwallis*, who says he never saw the Minutes in question, until shewn to him at *Portsmouth* to his very great Surprise.

5. Colonel *George Howard*, who says, he never saw these Minutes till Sir *John Mordaunt* shewed them to him after their Arrival at *Portsmouth*.

Vice Admiral *Knowles* being, at his own Desire, again called in, desired to supply an Omission in his former Evidence, *viz.* That he recollects there was a positive Determination, that no Minutes should be taken, but that the Informations only of the Persons examined, should be noted down.

Major General *Conway* observed, That, as he understood it, not even what the Witnesses said was intended to be made publick, or to stand Part of the Minutes of the Council of War, so as to be transmitted to any Person.

Vice Admiral *Knowles* confirmed the same; adding, that he never heard their Examination read.

Read the Remainder of the Papers received from Mr. Secretary *Pitt's* Office, *viz.*

39. Copy of a Letter from Sir John Mordaunt to Mr. Secretary Pitt, dated *Ramilles*, October 4, 1757.

40. Copy of a Letter from Sir John Mordaunt to Mr. Secretary Pitt, dated *Portsmouth*, October 6, 1757.

41. Copy of a Letter from Mr. Secretary Pitt to Sir *Edward Hawke*, dated October 7, 1757.

42. Copy of a Letter from Mr. Secretary Pitt to Sir *John Mordaunt*, dated October 7, 1757.

43. Copy of a Letter from Sir *Edward Hawke* to Mr. Secretary Pitt, dated *Ramilles* at *Spithead*, October 8, 1757. One P. M.

44. Copy of a Letter from Sir *John Mordaunt* to Mr. Secretary Pitt, dated *Portsmouth*, October 8, 1757.

The several Papers transmitted to the Judge-Advocate, and by him laid before the Board, being read, and no Person offering to give them any Information touching the Causes of the Failure of the Expedition,

Sir *John Mordaunt*, as Commander in Chief of the Land Forces employed therein, was asked, What have been the Reasons, if he has no Objection to laying them before the Board, which have prevented his Majesty's Instructions and Orders from being carried into Execution?

Who replied, that to prevent Trouble, and that the Matter may be the better understood, as his speaking is attended with Difficulty, he had committed the whole to writing, from Beginning to End, and delivered to the Board a Paper, as containing the same, which was, at his Desire, read in Words following, *viz.*

“ In order to give all the Satisfaction in my Power,
“ I have reduced into Writing the fullest Account of
“ the whole Matter I am able to give.

“ When I first received his Majesty's Commands
“ in regard to this Expedition, I was told, that the
“ Object of it was to make a Diversion on the Coast
“ of *France*.

“ That

“ That as far as respected *Rochefort* in particular, “ it was on the footing of a *Coup de Main*, or Sur- “ prize, and that consequently, if the Design was “ discovered, or the Alarm taken, it would be next “ to impossible to execute it.

“ I also understood, that unless a proper Place for “ the Landing, and safe Retreat of the Troops was “ discovered, particularly where the Ships could pro- “ tect them, and a safe Communication with the “ Fleet, and Conveyance of Supplies from it was “ secured, the Attempt could not be made.

“ In Confirmation of which I beg leave to take “ Notice of two Paragraphs in a Paper given me “ upon this Occasion by Sir *John Ligonier*, Com- “ mander in Chief of his Majesty’s Land Forces, “ whose long Experience, and great Abilities in the “ Art of War, will surely vindicate any Officer who “ is guided by so good an Authority; containing “ his Observations on the intended Expedition; “ which Paper, as I remember, was read before the “ Council.

“ The Paragraphs I mean, are as follows:”

“ If an Attempt is to be made on *Rochefort*, it “ will be the Part of the Admiral, to know the Coasts; “ to bring the Troops to the nearest Place; to co- “ ver their Landing by the Disposition of his Ships; “ and to destroy any Barbet Batteries which the Ene- “ my may have on the Shore; still remembring, that “ if the Troops are landed at too great a Distance “ from the Place, the Design will become dangerous, “ and probably impracticable.”

“ The second Paragraph,”

“ A safe and well secured Communication between “ the Camp and the Sea, from whence you are to re- “ ceive your Supplies of all Kinds, is absolutely ne- “ cessary; the whole depends upon it; but this being “ done, I should not be much in Pain for the Safety “ of the Troops; an inferior Number dares not ap- “ proach you, and one superior will not be easily af- “ sembled.

‘ sembled without your knowing it ; and, at all
‘ Events, you have secured a Retreat to the Ships.’

“ I also thought it clear from the State of *Rochefort*, as described by Colonel *Clerk*, and afterwards
“ by the *French* Pilot, that though it should have re-
“ mained in the same Condition as when they saw it,
“ which was not later than three Years past, yet a
“ few Days Preparation would make it sufficiently
“ defensible against a *Coup de Main* : For which Rea-
“ son, judging the Dependance on such an Operation
“ alone improper, in an Expedition of this Sort,
“ I applied to his Majesty’s Ministers in Council,
“ for two more Old Battalions, and Artillery for a
“ regular Attack, to force the Place, which, I
“ thought, from its Construction, as difficult to be
“ made defensible against a regular Attack, as it was
“ easy to secure it against an Assault. And although
“ it was not thought fitting to comply with this
“ Request, yet his Majesty having ordered me to
“ take the Command of the Expedition, upon the
“ Footing it was planned, I thought it my Duty to
“ obey ; understanding, that my Instructions gave
“ me Latitude to act according to the best of my
“ Judgment, regarding the Circumstances of the
“ Time, the Condition of the Place, and the Nature
“ of the Service ; and where any Difficulty arose, or
“ the Importance of the Subject required it, a Power
“ to call a Council of War.

“ Positive and credible Intelligence received, as
“ well before the Embarkation, as during the Voyage,
“ traced the Alarm, and the Preparations along the
“ *French* Coasts, from *Brest* and *St. Malo*es quite
“ down to *Rochefort*.

“ A Letter from a *French* Officer superintending
“ the Batteries near *Brest*, to the Captain of the
“ *Emerald*, taken and brought into the Fleet by Cap-
“ tain *Gilchrist*, describes the Preparations which
“ had for some Time been making there ; and that
“ Troops were not wanting on the Coast, there be-
“ ing at that Time near seven thousand regular Troops

“ on

“ on one Side the *Brest* Water, and more on the other Side, besides the Militia.

“ A Letter from Captain *Cleveland* declares, that on *Wednesday* the 17th of *August*, he spoke with a Dutch Convoy from *Rochelle*, and that a first Lieutenant came on board him, and told him, that the French expected the English at *Rochelle*, but were not alarmed.

“ It was afterwards confirmed to us on the Voyage by the Master of a Dutch Ship from *Vannes* in *France*, to *Dort*, spoke with by Captain *Proby* of his Majesty’s Ship *Medway*, on the 11th *September*; that the French expected to be attacked at *Rochelle* or *St. Martins*, by the English: Also that an Embargo was laid on all Shipping in *France*.

“ After all the several Indications and Intelligences mentioned, it was impossible to doubt, that there was a general Alarm spread, and still more so to imagine, that a Place like *Rothesfort*, the second certainly in Importance on the whole Coast, should, after such Warning, be totally neglected.

“ The Voyage being tedious, we did not make the French Coast till the 20th of *September*, about Noon.

“ It was the 23d before we got into the Road, and that Day made ourselves Masters of the Isle of *Aix*. The same Day Admiral *Brodrick*, with four Captains, was sent to sound the Coast, and find out a proper Landing place. The same Night also the Admiral declared, that the Fort of *Fouras* should be battered; and in Consequence of that, ordered the Pilot of the *Magnanime* to be sent for, in order to be examined upon that Head, who next Morning declared, a Ship might be brought up at a proper Distance to silence that Fort.

“ The next Morning, being the 24th, a Plan for landing the Troops as near the Fort of *Fouras* as possible, while one or more Ships battered it on the Water-side, and proposing also a Feint to be made on the Side of *Rochelle*, and the Isle of *Rhé*, was given

" given in by the Generals; but the Admiral not
 " approving of the Feint to be made, and declaring,
 " that *Fouras* could not be battered from the Sea,
 " without hazard of losing the Ship, the Admiral
 " and Captains, who returned, and made the Report
 " on the landing about One o'Clock also declaring,
 " That between the Fort of *Fouras* and *Rochelle* they
 " had found only two Landing-places, which were
 " both near the Point of *Chatelaillon* on the open
 " Bay, and where the Water was so shoal, that no
 " Ships could lye up to cover the Landing, or se-
 " cure the Retreat of the Troops: Upon these Con-
 " siderations, as well as upon other Intelligence I had
 " received in relation to the Place itself, I did, ac-
 " cording to the Latitude I understood to be in his
 " Majesty's Instructions, and agreeably to the Powers
 " therein given me, think it my Duty, in so import-
 " ant and critical a Case, to desire a General Council
 " of War, to take into Consideration what was pro-
 " per to be done in Execution of his Majesty's Secret
 " Instructions. That Council, composed equally of
 " Land and Sea Officers, having considered the
 " Nature of the Landing on the one Hand, and
 " of the Attack to be made on *Rochefort* on the
 " other, the Officers were unanimously of opinion,
 " That an Attempt upon *Rochefort* was neither ad-
 " viseable nor practicable. I concurred in that Op-
 " nion, and thought that neither my Duty, nor Re-
 " gard for his Majesty's Service, permitted me to
 " depart from it.

" And that our Reasons for so doing may more
 " fully appear to this Court, I will state, as clearly
 " as I can, the Grounds upon which we proceeded.

" *First*, In Confirmation of what has been already
 " mentioned in regard to the Landing, the Opinion
 " of so many Sea Officers of the greatest Judgment
 " and Experience seemed absolutely conclusive. To
 " this was added the Declaration of the most knowing
 " and able Pilot in the Fleet, who said, that with
 " westerly Winds, which set in from the Bay of *Bis-*
 " *say*,

“ say, he has known such a Sea in that Road, that
 “ he himself was kept many Weeks on Board his
 “ Ship, without being able once to go on Shore.
 “ And as in the Opinion of all, or most of the Sea
 “ Officers, both westerly Winds and blowing Wea-
 “ ther were daily expected at this Season of the
 “ Year, it must appear, that the Risque of sending
 “ the Troops ashore, under the Circumstances de-
 “ scribed, could by no Means be justified, though
 “ there had been a better Prospect of Success than
 “ there was, in regard to the Attempt on *Rochefort* ; as in all Cases of a Descent, particularly of
 “ a Descent upon the Continent of *France*, a secure
 “ Retreat for the Troops, and a constant Communi-
 “ cation with the Ships, from whence alone the
 “ Troops are to draw their Provision and Ammuni-
 “ tion, must be attended to by those to whom his
 “ Majesty trusts the Command of his Troops, as ab-
 “ solutely necessary, and that upon which the Ser-
 “ vice wholly depends.

“ In regard to the forcing of *Rochefort*, the weak-
 “ est Part of the Place, according to the first Intel-
 “ ligence of it, was at an Opening on the west Side
 “ of the Rampart, said by *Thierri* the Pilot, to be
 “ about sixty Yards in Length; but as this laid by
 “ the River, where the Ground was in general low,
 “ marshy, and cut with Ditches, into which the Tide
 “ flowed, and also by *Thierri* the Pilot’s Evidence,
 “ was closed with a Pallissade, it is plain, a few Days,
 “ nay, a few Hours Work must make it defensible
 “ against a *Coup de Main*; as it is known, a good
 “ Intrenchment may be thrown up, in soft yielding
 “ Ground like that, in twelve Hours Time, and by
 “ lying on the Water Level, the Ships in the River
 “ would intirely command it, as the Pilot declared,
 “ they did command all the Ground by the Water-
 “ edge; and that, in the present Case, within less
 “ than half Musket-shot, which was a better Defence
 “ than the Flanks of any Bastions.

“ As to the rest of the Circumference, the Ram-
 “ part was generally proved to be strong and high,
 “ with a Ditch, which two Witnesses declared posi-
 “ tively, they themselves had seen full of Water
 “ quite round, by means of Sluices in the Town;
 “ and, though the chief Engineer did not think the
 “ Ditch capable of being flowed, yet if it was so, he
 “ thought it not practicable to take the Place by
 “ Escalade.

“ Many of the Prisoners declared there were Num-
 “ bers of Troops upon the Shore, both Regulars
 “ and Militia, and even named particular Regi-
 “ ments.

“ What seemed certain on the whole was, that tho'
 “ even after all the Alarm there was on the Coast,
 “ it was possible there might not be an Army assem-
 “ bled to engage us in the Field; yet it seemed highly
 “ improbable, that there should not be a sufficient
 “ Force to make a good Garrison in the Place.
 “ There were also great Numbers of Workmen be-
 “ longing to the Docks; and the Crews of the Ships
 “ then in the River, if compleat, amounted to near
 “ 3000 Men.

“ It must also be considered, that though no
 “ Alarm should have been taken before we came
 “ within Sight of *Oleron*, which was on the 20th,
 “ it was from that to the 24th, when the Report of
 “ the Sea Officers was made, five Days inclusive;
 “ we must have been two Days more in Landing the
 “ Army and Stores; and had then, as we are in-
 “ formed, a March of eight or nine Miles to the
 “ Place, which must be made on the eighth Day
 “ from the Time we were seen on the Coast. There
 “ could be therefore no hopes of a Surprize; and as
 “ there was then a Mareschal of *France* in or near
 “ the Place, it is impossible, but such Precautions
 “ must have been taken, as no Officer of any Capa-
 “ city, or Experience, in the *French* Army, could
 “ have neglected. Add to this, that it was now full
 “ Moon, and the Nights were almost as light as

“ Day : So that to think of surprizing, or assaulting
 “ a Place, under all these Circumstances, it is pre-
 “ sumed, must appear contrary to the Nature of
 “ that Operation, and to all the Maxims laid down
 “ by every military Writer of Distinction ; such
 “ Attacks being, it is apprehended, only to be made
 “ where you can run upon a Place in a Night’s March,
 “ and where you are by previous Intelligence, ac-
 “ quainted with the Numbers and Nature of its
 “ Garrison and Guards, the Neglect of its Rounds
 “ and Defence, the exact Height of its Ramparts,
 “ and the State of its Ditch, Draw-Bridges, Gates,
 “ &c.

“ This I think is a fair Representation of the
 “ Prospect I had in that Undertaking ; which, in the
 “ Opinion of the whole Council of War, could not
 “ justify the exposing His Majesty’s Troops, by
 “ landing them without any Security for their
 “ Supplies, or for their Retreat.

“ The great Object of the Expedition having
 “ thus been found impracticable ; that we might
 “ not remain inactive, while the Engineers were
 “ demolishing the Fortifications of the Isle of *Aix*,
 “ we did our utmost Endeavours to discover, how
 “ we might annoy the Enemy by any other Means.
 “ The next Day after the Council of War, being
 “ the 26th, was spent in examining Witnesses, and
 “ gathering Information, that we might judge if it
 “ would be adviseable to make a Descent on the Isle
 “ of *Oleron*, and to see if we could find out a land-
 “ ing Place, from whence any Service could be done.
 “ Evidence was examined concerning the Situation
 “ of *Fouras*. The next Morning we went to re-
 “ connoitre it from the Isle of *Aix* ; there was some
 “ Difference of Opinion in regard to an Attempt
 “ upon it, but we came to no final Resolution ’till
 “ the Afternoon, when a Proposal was made to
 “ land at *Chatelaillon*, and make a sudden Attack
 “ upon *Fouras*, and the other Forts leading to, and
 “ upon the Mouth of the River *Charante*, with the

“ Land

“ Land Forces. A Council of War was ordered
“ to meet in the Morning; and that Council was
“ unanimous for attempting it that very Night.

“ The necessary Orders were immediately given;
“ and about One o’Clock, the Grenadiers and great
“ Part of the Troops, who were to land with me
“ in the first Embarkation, were on Board; when a
“ strong Wind blowing from the Shore, the Officers
“ of the Navy appointed to conduct the Landing,
“ represented, that it was with Difficulty the Long-
“ boats could make Way; that it would be Day
“ before the first Embarkation could get to Shore:
“ And that it would be five or six Hours more, be-
“ fore the Troops, first landed could be supported
“ by a second Embarkation. Add to this, that the
“ Boats belonging to the Transports would scarce be
“ able to get on Shore at all. For these Reasons,
“ the Generals found the Forces could not be
“ landed that Night.

“ The next Morning Sir *Edward Hawke* acquainted
“ Major General *Conway* and me, that if the Gene-
“ ral Officers had no farther military Operations to
“ propose, considerable enough to authorize his de-
“ taining the Squadron under his Command longer
“ there, he intended to proceed with it for *England*
“ without loss of Time. I made answer, that I
“ would summon the General Officers to consider
“ of an Answer; and I desired him to signify his
“ Intentions in Writing; which he did in a Letter
“ to me. Hereupon I summoned all those Land
“ Officers, who had been Members of the Councils
“ of War. We then took Sir *Edward Hawke*’s Let-
“ ter into Consideration; and the small Importance
“ of the Enterprize against the Forts did not appear
“ to us a sufficient Motive to justify us in detaining
“ His Majesty’s Fleet. We understood the Fleet
“ was to be employed in more considerable Services;
“ after this Expedition was over; and we had
“ learned from the Officers of the Navy, that near
“ this Time the *French* Fleets from *Martinico* and

“ *Louisbourg* were expected. These Considerations, together with the Limitation of the Time for our return to *England*, induced us to consent to Sir *Edward Hawke's* Proposal.”

Adjourned till Monday next the 14th Instant, at 11 o'Clock.

“ At a Meeting of the said General Officers appointed to enquire into the Causes of the Failure of the late Expedition, &c. (pursuant to Adjournment) on *Monday the 14th of November, 1757.*”

Read a second Time Sir *John Mordaunt's* Narrative, when he was desired to lay before the Board the whole of the Paper he had from Sir *John Ligonier*, from which he has quoted two Paragraphs; and the same was read as follows, *viz.*

“ There is a Chance in the best concerted military Enterprizes, which every Man of long Service must have experienced; what Share then must be left to Fortune in an Expedition, where neither the Country, nor the Number of Troops you are to act against, is known with any Precision.

“ The Capacity of the Generals may supply this Want of Intelligence; but to give them any positive Plan, or Rule of Action, under such Circumstances, I apprehend would be absurd.

“ If I am rightly informed, the great Point His Majesty has in View by this Expedition, and the alarming the Coasts of *France*, is the Hopes of making a powerful Diversion in Favour of H. R. H. the Duke, as well as the King of *Prussia*, who desires and presses much this very Measure.

“ In the Execution of this general Plan, a Project of giving a mortal Blow to the naval Power of *France*, is in his Majesty's Thoughts, by attacking and destroying, if possible, the Dock, Shipping, and naval Stores at *Rochefort*. A Plan of that Place, given by one of his Majesty's Engineers,

“ neers, who was there in 1754, seems to encourage the Attempt; and it must be owned, that without such Authority, it could hardly be believed that a Place of that great Importance could be left in so defenceless a Condition.

“ In all doubtful dangerous military Attempts, the Advantages that may accrue from Success, ought to be weighed against the Damage and Misfortunes, that may be the Consequences of a Repulse; and that well considered, may in Prudence determine the Choice.

“ If an Attempt is to be made upon *Rochefort*, it will be the Part of the Admiral to know the Coasts, to bring the Troops to the nearest Place, to cover their Landing by the Disposition of his Ships, and to destroy any Barbet Batteries, which the Enemy may have upon the Shore, still remembering, that if the Troops are landed at too great a Distance from the Place, the Design will become dangerous, and probably impracticable.

“ Supposing the Troops landed, it must be left to the Consideration of the Generals, whether they should not march with the proper Precautions directly to *Rochefort*, to prevent any Succours being thrown into the Place; at the same Time that the Marines should be employed in making a good Intrenchment for the Security of the Stores to be landed from Time to Time, as well as of a Retreat in Case of Necessity.

“ We are told, the Country in the Neighbourhood is low and marshy; that Circumstance might be of great Advantage in this Undertaking, because in that Case, Troops cannot march by *Overtures dans la Campagne*, but must follow the Dikes or Cawseys, which may be easily defended by Coupures or Redoubts.

“ A safe and well secured Communication between the Camp and the Sea, from whence you are to receive your Supplies of all Kinds, is absolutely necessary; the whole depends upon it.

“ But this being done, I should not be much in
 “ Pain for the Safety of the Troops; an inferior
 “ Number dares not approach you, and one superior
 “ will not be easily assembled, without your knowing
 “ of it; and at all Events you have secured a Retreat
 “ to the Ships.

“ I would advise to procure Guides upon the Spot,
 “ and paying them greatly, when faithful; there are
 “ Numbers of Protestants in that Province, that
 “ wish you well, and would be glad to go on board
 “ with you.

“ As for a *Coup de Main*, it may perhaps succeed
 “ best at your coming up, - as the Enemy may be in
 “ great Hurry, Surprize, and Consternation, at
 “ such an unexpected Visit, and not have had Time
 “ to make his Dispositions. But if that is not
 “ thought proper, it may succeed as well after the
 “ Place has been thoroughly reconnoitred, and you
 “ have fixt the Spots where you design to direct your
 “ greatest Efforts; and if the Enemy see any Prepa-
 “ rations for a regular Attack, they will less suspect
 “ a *Coup de Main*.

“ *Bergen-op-zoom* was taken by a *Coup de Main*,
 “ after a long Siege.

“ *St. Philip's* was taken by scaling Ladders and a
 “ *Coup de Main*, though the Garrison was 3000
 “ strong, after a Siege of 56 Days.

“ The Necessity of dividing a small Garrison in a
 “ Place of such Circumference as *Roebefort*, may fa-
 “ cilitate the Success of a bold Attempt.”

Upon reading that Part of Sir *John Mordaunt's*
 Narrative, which relates to the Night of the 28th of
 September, in which Night it was proposed to have
 landed, where one Reason assigned, why the Troops
 were not accordingly landed, is “ that it would be Day
 “ before the first Embarkation could get on Shore,”
 a Kind of Contradiction was observed between that
 and Rear-Admiral *Brodrick's* Letter to Sir *Edward*
Hawke on that Subject, who writes, that “ the Ge-
 “ nerals are come to a Resolution not to land To-
 “ night.

" night, but to wait till Day-light, when they can have a full View of the Ground where they are to land." And Rear-Admiral *Brodrick* was thereupon desired to inform the Board, whether that was the Fact he meant to write, or whether he had, through Hurry, expressed himself otherwise than he intended ?

Who said, that what was contained in the Letter he must abide by ; that he gave it to Sir *John Mordaunt* to read before he sent it, to see if what he had wrote was agreeable to his Intention ; at the same Time desiring Sir *John* would explain the Reasons fully, as the Blame would lye upon him, Rear-Admiral *Brodrick* ; and that Sir *John* returned him the Letter, without making any Objection thereto ; and answered him, that the Blame would not lye upon him, but that they (the General Officers of the Land Forces) would be answerable.

Rear-Admiral *Brodrick* added, that he believes Major General *Conway* likewise read the Letter.

Major General *Conway* said, that he did not read the Letter ; and particularly remembers, that from the Letter being so short, he advised Sir *John Mordaunt*, that it should in his Opinion have been much fuller, setting forth the Reasons particularly of not landing the Forces that Night.

Sir *John Mordaunt* admitted, that the Letter was shewn to him ; but in the Hurry he did not sufficiently attend to the Contents ; and at the same Time did Rear-Admiral *Brodrick* the Justice to say, all was ready on his Part, and that he shewed the greatest Readiness to assist and co-operate for the Good of the Service ; but that he was certainly mistaken in the Reason assigned for the not landing ; and in order now to convince the Rear-Admiral thereof, desired him to recollect, whether all the Arguments used did not turn upon its being necessary, or at least advisable, to land before Day-light ; which was thought scarcely possible, as the Wind then was.

Rear-Admiral *Brodrick* reply'd, that the Landing would have been attended with great Difficulty, but is pretty well assured, they would have been on Shore before Day-light, or near the Time of Day; but that both Wind and Tide would have been against them for the second Embarkation, which would have occasioned at least six Hours Distance between the first and second Landing; he is nevertheless satisfied there is no Mistake in his Letter, and must beg Leave to repeat the Words Sir *John* himself made use of, " that they must see the Ground they were to land on."

Major General *Conway*, in order to explain this, observed, that Rear-Admiral *Brodrick* must, as he imagines, have mistaken the Sense, in which those Words were used, as what he conceives to have been meant by them is, Sir *John Mordaunt*'s Intention of having the Ground viewed in the Morning, in order to embark the Night following.

The following Questions were then proposed by his Grace the Duke of *Marlborough* to Sir *John Mordaunt*, desiring he would use his Discretion in answering them, and received the several Answers subscribed to each Question, *viz.*

Q. Was the Attack of the Fort on the Isle of *Aix* with a view to facilitate the Landing on the Continent?

A. When he first attended the Council in *London*, he understood it was; and is of Opinion, the Fort alone was of no Consequence, had it not been with that View.

Q. Was that Attack necessary to engage the Attention of the whole Fleet and Army?

A. In his Opinion it was, because he understood the taking that Fort, and Fort *Fouras*, was to be done by the Shipping, and then they might have gone on to *Rochefort*.

Q. Did he see any Number of Forces or Batteries on the Shore, so as to make the Assistance of the Ships

Ships necessary to cover the landing on the Continent ?

A. There were Forces and Cannon, but the Number he can't answer for, and they were at a Distance from the Shore at the Time the Isle of *Aix* was taken, and did not know, where there was a Place to land. The Captain of the *Viper* Sloop said, the Sand Hills where they were to land would have concealed any Number of Forces, and it was not natural to expect the Troops would shew themselves, till they knew where the Landing was intended.

Q. Did he send the Quartermaster General or any Land Officers, with Rear Admiral *Brodrick*, to reconnoitre the Landing Places ?

A. He thought that a Matter relating to the Sea, and he did not : And besides, they could only make the Soundings in the Night, and consequently his sending a Land Officer with them could have been of no Use.

Q. When the Admiral returned with his Report, if a Council of War was thought necessary, why was it delayed till next Day ?

A. It was proposed by Major General *Conway* to go that Afternoon to the Isle of *Aix* to reconnoitre from thence, whether they could find out any Place near or toward *Fouras*, and also to examine the Prisoners ; and the Men of War laid at such a Distance from each other at that Time, that the Members of the Council could not, without some Difficulty, be convened.

Q. Did he go that Afternoon to the Isle of *Aix* ?

A. Yes.

Q. Does he think, that a Detachment of four or five hundred Men could have taken Fort *Fouras* by Land, whilst the rest were marching to *Rochefort* ?

A. He knew nothing, at that Time, of the Strength of Fort *Fouras* on the Land-side.

Q. Had he been in Possession of Fort *Fouras*, could they not have secured a Retreat by that very narrow Neck of Land, which runs out into the Sea, against a much

a much greater Number of Forces, that might have opposed them ?

A. For an Answer to this Question, he begs Leave to refer to Major-General *Conway*, who laid that Way, with Vice Admiral *Knowles's* Division. — Major General *Conway's* Answer is, That the Part referred to, is not properly a Neck of Land, but a Sand, which is covered at High Water.

Q. (*To Sir John Mordaunt.*) Does he not think he could have secured a Retreat (independent of that supposed Neck of Land) if in Possession of Fort *Fou-ras*?

A. Doubtless it would have been of great Use for securing a Retreat.

Q. Were not the Accounts of *Rochefort* contradictory?

A. It is difficult to recollect all that might be said on the Subject; the Council of War shews there was a Contradiction.

Q. Did the Evidence of the *French* Prisoners taken at the Isle of *Aix* contradict, or confirm the Report of Lieut. Colonel *Clerk*?

A. Some contradicted, and some confirmed it; but he gave little or no Weight to what the *French* Prisoners said.

Q. Did the Evidence, that said there was a wet Ditch round the Town, affirm, that that Ditch remained wet at Low Water?

A. He refers to the Council of War, and thinks from the Sluices at both Ends, it is natural to suppose it must be so.

Q. Does he think it possible to judge of the Practicability of taking a Place by Assault without reconnoitring, since the Evidence was contradictory?

A. His Narrative, as he conceives, explains that very fully; and he begs leave to remark that two Witnesses saw the Place wet, and the other only says, that when he saw the Ditch, it did not appear to him capable of being flowed.

Q. Did

Q. Did he communicate his Instructions to the Council of War?

A. He laid them upon the Table.

Q. What was done on the 26th and 27th of September?

A. He refers to the Narrative.

Q. What Reasons induced him to consent to landing on the 28th, since it appeared so difficult on the 25th?

A. The Difficulty was the Retreat, and if they took *Fouras*, which it was in View to have done on the 28th, they had a Retreat.

Q. Why would he risque the Troops on an inconsiderable Object, when he did not think it advisable to risque them on that of so much more Importance, and particularly pointed out by his Instructions, *viz.* the Attack upon *Rockefort*?

A. He looked upon it, the great Risque was avoided by securing a Retreat in the taking of *Fouras*, and in the other Case (that of attempting *Rockefort* without such Retreat) he refers to the Quotation from Sir *John Ligonier*'s Paper used in his Narrative.

Q. How came he to resolve on returning to *England* without holding another Council of War, seeing it had been unanimously agreed in a former Council to land?

A. He refers himself to his Narrative, and to Sir *Edward Hawke*'s Letter to him, which was produced, *viz.*

“ *Ramilles, Basque Road, 29th Sept. 1757.* ”

“ SIR,

“ Should the General Officers of the Troops have
“ no farther Military Operation to propose, con-
“ siderable enough to authorize my detaining the
“ Squadron under my Command longer here, I
“ beg

“ beg Leave to acquaint you, that I intend to proceed with it for *England* without Loss of Time.

" I am, Sir, your most Obedient

" To Most Humble Servant,
" Sir John Mordaunt. " ED. HAWKE.

Sir John Mordaunt having answered to the several Questions proposed to him, desired to observe in Addition to his Narrative, that the first Design was to have taken *l' Isle d'Aix* and *Fort Fouras* by Sea, and then there would have been great Ease in the rest of the Enterprize; that he imagined from the first setting out *l' Isle d'Aix* and *Fort Fouras* could be taken by Sea; and in the Evening of taking *l' Isle d'Aix*, Admiral Sir Edward Hawke mentioned, that he would take *Fouras* the next Morning, by laying a Ship to it: And the next Morning Sir Edward called for the Pilot of the *Magnanime*, and examined him, whether he could lay his Ship so, as to dismantle *Fort Fouras*? to which the Pilot answered, he could. The same Morning Major General Conway came to the *Ramilies*, and produced the Plan referred to in the Narrative.

Colonel *James Wolfe*, Quarter-Master General upon the Expedition, being called, at the Desire of Sir *John Mordaunt*, and desired to inform the Board what passed the Evening after taking the *Isle d'Aix*, in regard to the Attack of *Fouras*, — said, that he had been at the *Isle of Aix*, and returned about 8 o'Clock, and took the Liberty of suggesting his Opinion to Sir *Edward Hawke* and Sir *John Mordaunt*, that he did not doubt but a Ship of War might batter Fort *Fouras*, and that a Body of Troops might be landed at the same time, and attack it with Success: He took the Liberty also to mention, (as he only had seen the Fort) that if Sir *Edward Hawke* thought proper to make a Diversion near *Rochelle* at the same time, it

might engage the Attention of the *French*, and give an Opportunity of making a Descent between : He also hinted his Opinion, as to sending the Bomb Ketches out, not knowing, but Bombs might be thrown into *Rochelle*; and Sir *Edward* sent for them up accordingly. He likewise mentioned another Circumstance, in regard to sending for the Pilot of the *Magnanime*, who would inform Sir *Edward*, if there was Depth of Water sufficient to carry a Ship up to *Fouras*; adding, from the indifferent Opinion he had of the Fort, a Forty or Fifty Gun Ship might at least annoy the Fort, so as to give an Opportunity of Landing. Sir *Edward* then seemed to incline to the Attack of *Fouras*, and mentioned the *Barfleur* as a Ship he intended to employ ; talked of doing it the next Morning, and appeared very keen and warm about it ; that Sir *Edward* did send for the Pilot of the *Magnanime*, and examined him the next Day, but he, Colonel *Wolfe*, was not present ; that he spoke to the Pilot of the *Magnanime* himself the next Morning, (but whether before or after his being examined by Sir *Edward*, is not certain) and asked him, whether he cou'd carry a Ship up to *Fouras*? The Pilot's Answer was, either he could (or he believed he could) take the *Magnanime* within half a Mile, as he understood, of *Fouras*; and if he recollects, said, he would beat it down in less Time, than he had done the other Fort. He asked the Pilot further, Whether between Fort *Fouras* and Fort *la Point* any Persons could be landed during the Attack to invest *Fouras*, and desired the Pilot to find a Guide amongst the Prisoners, to shew a proper Place for landing, venturing to tell him, they should be handsomely rewarded, if they performed the Service well. He also asked the Pilot, why he chose the *Magnanime*, rather than the *Barfleur*, or any other Ship? he answered, on account of the Captain, of whom his Expression was, “ *Il est jeune & brave, Servez vous en.*”

Being asked by Sir *John Mordaunt*, whether he ever heard

heard any Sea Captain say, he would undertake the taking of the Fort?

Answered, Captain *Colby* of the Princess *Amelia*, in Conversation on that Head, told him, he had made Offers to attack it; is not certain he said, he had made those Offers to Sir *Edward Hawke*, but frequently to Mr. *Brodrick*. He, Colonel *Wolfe*, likewise observed to Captain *Colby*, as it was then late, being the 28th *September*, if the Troops were pushed, there might possibly be a Necessity of attacking it, in order to bring off the Troops; and said, in that Case he supposed, as an *Englishman* who wished well to his Country, he would urge the Admiral to do it; and, he believes, he spoke to the same Purpose afterwards to Mr. *Brodrick* in the *America*.

Being asked, of what Strength did *Fouras* appear to him, when he first reconnoitred it?

Answered, he saw it immediately after the Attack of the Isle of *Aix*, and it appeared to him to be a weak Fortress: The Front and Parapets were of Masonry, which, he conceives, must have been of Advantage, and consisted of a streight Line of a Wall, and another within that higher up, and no Outworks, (he speaks of the Side towards the Sea.) — He could not from his Eye discover the Land-side, nor get one Word of Intelligence concerning it at that Time. There were 24 Embrazures to the Sea side, and a Battery beyond, which Battery he did not see the first Day.

Being asked, (by Sir *John Mordaunt*'s Desire) what Number of good Troops would, in his Opinion, have enabled a Commander to prevent their landing at the proposed Landing-place at *Chate-laillon*?

Answered, Any Opinion he can form upon that Point must be very indeterminate; but, from what he could observe, the Sand Hills were pretty near to the Water-side, and his Notion is, all Circumstances considered, a Thousand good Foot, and 200 or 300 Horse, might have prevented about 2000 Men landing from Boats.

Being asked by the Board, How many could have embarked in the Boats ?

Answered, He believes there was never an exact Calculation made of that ; he should think about thirty-six Companies, which consisted of about sixty private Men each, besides Officers.

Q. Did he see any Troops, where it was proposed to land ?

A. No. He saw six Pieces of Cannon on the Point, but which he thinks could not reach the Beach.

Q. If a sufficient Number of Men had been concealed behind the Sand Hills, could Ships in that Case be of any Use to cover the Landing ?

A. No : Such Troops must have been safe from the Ships while concealed.

Colonel *George Howard*, being called at Sir *John Mordaunt's* Desire, and asked, what Account the Captain of the *Viper Sloop* gave him ? said, that he received Sir *John Mordaunt's* Orders to go reconnoitring with Colonel *Wolfe* on *Thursday*, which he believes was the 29th of *September* ; and when they came to the *Viper Sloop*, which was stationed nearest the Coast, as they were taking their View of the Land, he asked Captain *Skynner*, the Commander, some Questions relative to Observations he might have made. The Captain said, he came there on the *Sunday* before, and that on the *Sunday* Afternoon, or *Monday* Morning, he saw a considerable Number of Troops marching down, and that he reckoned eight or nine Pair of Colours ; that he saw them in Camp ; that the next Morning the View of the Camp was intercepted, so that he could not see them again, which he attributed to the Enemy having flung up some Ground on the Beach ; and that he saw the Sand Hills on the Beach considerably higher than they were on *Sunday* when he came there ; which he, Colonel *Howard*, reported to Sir *John Mordaunt*.

Being questioned by the Board, whether he asked the

the Captain of what particular Numbers he thought the Troops might consist?

Said, he did ask him that Question, and that the Captain answered him, he could not determine; but that he, Colonel *Howard*, might better judge from the Number of Colours.

Being questioned farther, he said, the Captain could give no Description of the Quantity of Ground they covered in their Camp, nor did he specify, whether they were regular Forces, or the Troops of the Country.

Captain *Thomas Osbert Mordaunt* being examined, at the Desire of Sir *John Mordaunt*, said, that he received a Message from Sir *Edward Hawke* the Morning after the Attack upon the Isle of *Aix*, desiring him to come down to the Cabbin; where he found the Admiral, Vice-Admiral *Knowles*, and the Pilot of the *Magnanime*. The Admiral desired him, Captain *Mordaunt*, as he did not understand *French* himself, to ask the Pilot some Questions for him. After asking some about the Approach to *Rochelle*, he asked particularly, how near a Ship could be brought to *Fouras*; the Pilot said, he could bring the *Magnanime*, as his Expression was “*dans un demy Mile*, “*meme dans un quart de Mile*;” but he must then run the Ship upon the soft Mud, in which she would stand secure till the next Tide, which would bring her off. And lest there should have been any Misunderstanding, as to the Distance intended by a Mile, the Pilot was desired to explain himself, and said he meant “*Miles of England*.” The Admiral replied, that would do. The Admiral then asked, if, by lightening the *Barfleur*, he could bring her as near; the Pilot said he could, but he had rather go with the *Magnanime*, because Captain *How* was young and brave; and that he could not be better employed than in the Service of his Country. The Admiral mentioned, he did not care that Ship should go, as having been upon severe Service before.

Major General *Conway* being desired by Sir *John Mordaunt* to give an Account, as to the Time proposed for landing, whether it was intended to have been by Night, or by Day-light, and the Reasons of its being put off, said, that he understood it to have been the Intention of all (he knows it was his own) to have landed in the Night, and the Disposition was made to land accordingly. Captain *How* first came on Board the *Ramillies*, where they all were before they went to their Rendezvous; and said, he was sorry to observe to them, the Wind was sprung up from the Shore, and feared it would be a great Obstruction to landing that Night.—Sir *John Mordaunt* said, he would go to the Rendezvous on board the *America*, where they should be better Judges, and that he would make the Landing, if possible. When they came on board the *America*, Rear-Admiral *Brodrick* and several of the Captains said (believes Mr. *Brodrick* spoke first, but is not certain) they hoped it would not be imputed to any Backwardness in them, but it was their Opinion, the Wind sat so strong against them, it would be about Day-light before the Boats could get to Shore, and six Hours more, before a second Embarkation could be landed. Sir *John Mordaunt* said, as he remembers, the Disposition was made for landing in the Night, and that he thought it must be put off to another Night; and took the Opinion of the Officers present upon that Subject.

Major General *Cornwallis* confirmed the same in general; adding, that he rather understood from his Conversation with Captain *How*, that his Opinion was against landing in general, as he confesses his own was; but it was most indisputably the Intention, that the Troops should land in the Night. He remembers Captain *Dennis* particularly thought the landing, as the Wind then was, an impracticable, or at least, a very dangerous Enterprize.

Colonel *George Howard* confirmed the same, as to the Disposition being made for landing in the Night, and the Reason of its being deferred.

Colonel *Thomas Brudenell* being desired by Sir *John Mordaunt* to give an Account of what passed within his Knowledge, as to the Difficulty of Landing, said, that by Sir *John Mordaunt*'s Orders the Afternoon of the 28th, it appeared the Intention was to land before the Day came on. The Long-boat belonging to the Transport he, Colonel *Brudenell*, was aboard of, was a pretty large one, and there were embarked in it 40 or 42 Soldiers. They waited some Time along side the Ship, expecting the Signal to put off, and observing that the Wind blew very strong from the Shore, he asked the Master of the Transport, whether he thought it possible, that the Yawl with four Soldiers in it cou'd tow that Long-boat to Shore? who answered, he was satisfied it was impossible to do it in less than seven Hours, but he rather thought it was impossible to do it at all. He, Colonel *Brudenell*, had apprehended the Men of War's Boats were to have attended, and assisted in towing them; for having been on Board several Ships, it appeared to him an impossible Thing; this was about One in the Morning. Whilst they were waiting, an Officer of his Regiment, who had been on Board the Transport, whence the Grenadiers and Pickets were to go into the Boats, came on Board, and told him, Captain *Buckle* of the *Royal George* had been on Board that Transport, and observed to them, that as the Wind was, he thought it impracticable for the Boats to land; and that Captain *Buckle* was gone on board the Admiral to acquaint him therewith. In about an Hour and an half after that, another Boat came along side the Transport with a Sea Officer, as he believes, in it, who said, Captain *Buckle* was come back from the Admiral, and the Men were not to land that Night, but were to return to their Ships again. This he did not take for an Order, and so his Men remained in the Boat, where they had been some Hours, till he received Sir *John Mordaunt*'s Orders to put them on Board again. He likewise asked several others next Day, what had passed on board their Transports,

Transports, and found it to have been the general Opinion of the Masters, that it was not possible to land that Night.

Vice Admiral *Knowles* being asked, at Sir *John Mordaunt's* Desire, whether several Winds might not have kept the Fleet a considerable Time in *Basque Road*, without a Possibility of getting out?

Answered, He has already given his Opinion in the first Council of War on this Head, to which he begs Leave to refer; for that the same Wind which would prevent the re-imbarking of the Troops, would detain the Squadron there.

Asked, Did he not think it advisable to sail on their Return Home at the Time they did, considering the Situation of the *French Fleets*, which might be expected home?

Answered, His Opinion never was asked about it.

Being desired by Sir *John Mordaunt* now to give his Opinion on that Question, said, That after he found there was no landing for the Troops, without great Risk, he should, had he been properly asked by his superior Officer, certainly have given his Opinion for coming away.

Sir *John Mordaunt* here begged Leave to observe, that he did apply for a Council of War to Sir *Edward Hawke*, who refused him, giving him for Answer, that the Seamen had nothing to do with it, it was a Land Operation only: He, Sir *John*, since finds, upon a closer Perusal of his Instructions, that he had himself a Power to have called a Council of War, but was not then apprised of it.

Major General *Conway* was then questioned by the Board, Whether Sir *John Mordaunt's* Instructions were laid before the Council of War?

Answered, Yes.

Q. What Reasons he had to apprehend a Body of Troops to oppose their Landing?

A. From general Reasoning upon the Subject, and the Information of the Prisoners.

Q. What was that Information?

A. One said, there were eleven Battalions, another mentioned seven ; and though he paid very little Regard to any of them singly, yet, upon the Whole, he thought there was no room left to doubt but there were some Troops.

Q. Whether any Batteries or Troops appeared to him ?

A. Very few : There was a small Battery, but he imagined the Troops would naturally conceal themselves till the Attempt to land.

He then observed, that no Officer, as he conceives, called to a Council of War, is criminally accountable for his Opinion given in that Council ; but if called upon, he is very ready to give the Reasons that guided his Opinion.

Being desired to mention those Reasons, he said, as well from general Reasoning as Intelligence, tho' he knew of no considerable Army in the Field, he was persuaded there must be a considerable Number of Men in *Rocheftort*.—They had been seen five Days on the Coast, and two Days more must have been taken up in landing with the Stores.—They had no particular Intelligence of many necessary Circumstances relative to the State of the Place : They could not surprize it, and had not Artillery to attack it in form, and no secure Retreat for the Troops.—That he did imagine there would be an Opposition upon landing, but the Want of a Retreat was the principal Objection with him.—He further said, they had not at first sufficient Intelligence to depend on taking Fort *Fouras* by an Attack on the Land Side ; when he thought the Intelligence sufficient, he did propose landing in order to attack it. He then, to save the Trouble of any further Questions, said, that he had prepared a short State of the whole Proceedings, beginning from the first Attack upon *Aix*, so far as his own Conduct is any way concerned, which was laid before the Board, and read as follows, *viz.*

“ On Friday the 23d of September, I went up with
“ three Battalions to sustain the Attack on the Fort
“ of *Aix*. “ On

“ On Saturday Morning I went on board the *Ramilies* (Sir *Edward Hawke*’s Ship) and there gave
“ in a Plan for landing as near *Fouras* as possible, and attacking the *Fort de l’Equille* near it with
“ a Detachment of Grenadiers, while a Ship lay up
“ to batter the *Fort of Fouras* by Sea ; and for making a Feint on the Side of *Rochelle* and the Isle of
“ *Rhé*, to facilitate that Attempt. This Plan was
“ accepted by Sir *John Mordaunt*, but not approved of by the Admiral.

“ Soon after the Rear Admiral and Captains, sent
“ to reconnoitre and sound the Coast, reporting, that
“ there was no landing Place near *Fouras*, and that
“ the only landing Places they had discovered between that Fort and *La Rochelle*, were near the
“ Point of *Chatelaillon* ; and it being also now declared, that the *Fort of Fouras* could not be attacked by Sea, that Scheme was laid aside, and a general Council of War called, which met next Morning, the 25th ; wherein it was unanimously resolved, by both Sea and Land Officers present, that the landing near *Chatelaillon*, in order to march up and attack *Rochefort* directly, as the Question was there stated, was neither advisable nor practicable.

“ But a Question being then proposed for determining to come back to *England*, I opposed it, as it was not in that View I gave my Assent to the former Question ; and thought we should by all Means see, what farther could be done to annoy the Enemy.

“ We met next Day to sign the Council ; and Sir *John Mordaunt* then proposed landing on the Island of *Oleron*, and said, he had mentioned it to Sir *Edward Hawke*, who approved it. To this I added, that if that Place was fixt upon for a Landing, I should then propose attacking the Castle of *Oleron* on the South End of the Island, and passing over from thence to the Continent, between *Brouage* and the *Charente*, which is about a League

“ and from thence not more than two Leagues to
 “ *Rockefort* : And as no Attempt was probably ex-
 “ pected on that Side, we might possibly succeed, so
 “ far as to destroy some of the Ships or Magazines.
 “ But this Scheme being laid aside after some Debate,
 “ I then proposed to the General Officers present, to
 “ go and view *Fouras*, and the Coast near it, to see
 “ what could be done on that Side, which was agreed
 “ to.

“ They met accordingly at the Isle of *Aix*, where
 “ I gave my Opinion for the Landing and Attack of
 “ that Fort, and the Fort *de l'Equille*; but that At-
 “ tempt being in general judged too difficult, it was
 “ dropt.

“ The same Afternoon I went on board the *Ra-*
 “ *milies*, and proposed to Sir *Edward Hawke* and Sir
 “ *John Mordaunt* the landing at *Chatelaillon*, and
 “ marching from thence to attack *Fouras* and the
 “ other Forts on the Back; of which I thought we
 “ had now sufficient Knowledge to depend upon the
 “ taking *Fouras*, as a secure Retreat for the Troops,
 “ and that we might then see, what farther could be
 “ done.

“ This Proposition was next Morning referred to
 “ a Council of War, where it was agreed upon, and
 “ ordered to be put in execution that Night.

“ But was put off, on a Representation of the Sea
 “ Officers, upon account of the strong Wind then
 “ blowing from the Shore.

“ It was also at the same Time reported, that
 “ some Camps and Entrenchments had been seen on
 “ the Shore, particularly near the Place where the
 “ Landing was to have been made.

“ I therefore asked Sir *John Mordaunt*'s Leave to
 “ go, and accordingly went next Morning to recon-
 “ noitre the Coast from *Fouras* to *Chatelaillon*.

“ On my Report, Sir *John Mordaunt* called the
 “ Land Officers of the Council of War together, to
 “ know their Opinions, whether it was now proper to
 “ renew the Attempt for the Landing.—I did de-

“ clare

"clare it to be mine, but the other Gentlemen being
"all of a contrary Opinion, I acquiesced."

Major General *Conway* being asked, by desire of Sir *John Mordaunt*, Whether he, Sir *John*, did shew him Sir *Edward Hawke's* Letter of the 29th of September, with regard to the Return to *England*?

Answered, That Sir *John* did shew him that Letter, and at the same Time offered Major General *Conway* (if it was his Opinion) still to go on; but he replied, it was too delicate a Matter for him to take upon himself, unless it was also Sir *John's* own Opinion; that whatever might be his private Sentiments, he should acquiesce in the general Opinion, which he did accordingly.

Major General *Cornwallis* being called upon said, As he did not imagine his Conduct was under inquiry, he is not prepared with a Narrative. That he was a Major General, and the Third in Command in the Expedition, and, as he conceives, not responsible for the Failure or Success. That he was never wanting in any Part of his Duty, was always at his Post, and ready to obey any Order from his superior Officers: That he attended Councils of War when summoned, as was his Duty; and when there, gave his Opinion according to the best of his Judgment, and does not conceive himself to be accountable for the Opinion so given: But to any Questions the Board should think fit to propose, he would very readily give an Answer to the best of his Judgment.

Being asked, Whether he did at any Time, in his Opinion, see it practicable or advisable to land?

Answered, At no Time, as there appeared to him no Security for landing the Troops, nor any Retreat secured; and lastly, he had heard an able Pilot say, he had been seven Weeks there, without a Possibility of a Boat passing or repassing. The Retreat and Communication between the Troops and Shipping, appeared to him absolutely necessary; and their having been there so long, was a stronger Argument with him against landing. And informed, as he now is,

under all the Disadvantage of popular Opinion, were the Case again to happen under the same Circumstances, he should now persist in the same Opinion. He would as readily, as any Officer in the Service, have hazarded his own Person, if ordered to land with an Hundred Men only ; but when called upon for his Opinion in so momentous an Affair, he could not answer to himself risquing the Whole. He added, he was against the Measure of landing in the Second Council of War, but acquiesced in the Opinion of the Majority of the Council, and was ready at his Post, to put the Resolution in Execution.

Being asked, whether any Thing appeared to him to prevent the Communication between the Ships and the Troops ?

Answered, no Men of War could get nearer than two Miles, which made the whole of the Communication precarious, as it depended only on the Wind's shifting into a particular Corner at the critical Juncture of the Equinox.

Colonel *George Howard*, as having been called to the Councils of War, by the Commanders of the Expedition, was then desired to lay before the Board, if he thought proper, the Motives which had the principal Weight with him, together with any other Matters, that he might judge material for the Information of the Board ; who said, he was very little prepared, not knowing he should be called upon, but nevertheless readily mentioned to the Board the principal Matters, which had determined his Judgment, being to the same Effect, as contained in the Paper by him presented the Day following.

Adjourned till the Morrow at 11 o'Clock in the Forenoon.

At a meeting of the said General Officers, appointed to inquire into the Causes of the Failure of the late Expedition, &c. pursuant to Adjournment on *Tuesday the 15th of November 1757.*

Major

Major General *Cornwallis*, desired to add, in Explanation of what he mentioned Yesterday, with regard to the Pilot's Evidence upon the Impossibility of passing, and repassing, that he does not thereby mean any particular Storm or Tempest; but that the ordinary Wind sitting in from the Bay, would make such a Surf on the Shore, that Boats could not go there.

Colonel *Howard* acquainted the Board, that he had now committed to writing the Motives of his Opinion, differing in little more from the Account he gave them Yesterday, than that they are more methodically digested, and desired they might be accepted instead of his verbal Narration; and the same were accepted accordingly, and read, as follows, *viz.*

“ Unaccused and unconscious, as I am, of the least military Misconduct, I shall however, for the Satisfaction of this Honourable Board, relate the Motives, which induced the Opinions I have given, not as a Matter of Self-defence, but of Evidence only, agreeable to the Summons I received to attend at this Place.

“ As it is well known I went upon the Expedition, only as a Regimental Officer, and that my Situation could neither intitle me to know the Motives upon which it was undertaken, nor the Springs which were to conduct the Execution of it, I flatter myself I cannot be in the least accountable for the Failure of the Enterprize.

“ As the Execution of this Affair was intrusted to three General Officers of such established Characters, I little thought I should be concerned, but in a cheerful Obedience of the Orders I might receive from them,

“ When I was summoned as eldest Colonel to the Council of War on the 25th of September, I was totally uninformed, as my Situation could not admit of my being present at any previous Consultation.

“ When

“ When the Object of the Council was proposed, “ and the Rear Admiral’s Report of the 24th relative to the Soundings and two landing Places, “ which he had discovered, was read, the great Difficulties, which attended the landing of the Troops, “ Artillery, Ammunition, Provisions, and Camp “ Equipage at either of those Places, as well as the “ great Uncertainty of securing a Retreat from thence “ in case of any Emergency, and of preserving a “ Communication with our Shipping, were so fully demonstrated, (as no Ship, not even a Frigate of “ the Fleet, could afford the least Protection, either “ in the landing or reimbarking of the Troops) that “ I thought the Attempt uncommonly hazardous, and “ that they were by no Means the proper Places of “ landing, to facilitate the Designs upon *Rocbefort*.

“ In Consequence of which Opinion, I asked at “ the Council of War, If it was not possible for a “ Ship or two to favour a Descent of the Troops “ near *Fouras*, by attacking that Fort by Sea; which “ I thought should have been the immediate Opera- “ tion, after taking the Fort of *Aix*; as by that “ Means we should have been three Miles at least “ nearer to *Rocbefort*, the Troops, &c. could have “ been landed in a very short Space of Time, and “ nothing could have interrupted our Communica- “ tion with the Ships: But the Admiral declared it “ was impracticable, and that no Ship could go up “ higher than the Isle of *Aix* without being on “ Ground.

“ The other Part of my Opinion was founded upon “ the Evidence mentioned in the Council of War, “ being (as I have observed before) quite uninformed, “ and not knowing any thing about *Rocbefort*, but “ from the Evidence which appeared at the Council.

“ As to the second Council of War on the 28th, “ tho’ I do not think any great publick Utility would “ have been answered in landing the Troops for the “ Purposes therein mentioned; and tho’ the Pro- “ posal was made late in point of Time, yet I was “ deter-

“ determined no Negative of mine should appear to any Operation it was thought proper to undertake by so many better Judges than myself.

“ I have ever been most ready to exert myself in all Points of my Duty, shall constantly persevere in so doing, and defy the World to lay a contrary Behaviour to my Charge.”

Captain *William Phillips* delivered to the Board a Paper from Sir *John Ligonier*, which he was directed to inform them is the Original, of which Sir *John Mordaunt* produced a Copy, and refered to in his Narrative; and which Sir *John Ligonier* is desirous the Board should understand, was by no Means intended as Instructions, but only Hints, which he had put upon Paper and read to Sir *John Mordaunt*, who thereupon desired a Copy. Captain *Phillips* likewise observed, That there is a Paragraph added at the Foot of this Paper, which is not contained in Sir *John Mordaunt's* Copy, and which Sir *John Ligonier* had directed him likewise to mention to the Board: The said Paragraph is, as follows, *viz.*

“ When Sir *John Ligonier* wrote this Paper, of which Sir *John Mordaunt* desired a Copy, he knew nothing of the Disposition of the *French Troops*. — The small Number of those Troops that could be upon that Coast, by the Disposition produced at the Cabinet Council, lessened very much the Necessity of the Precautions to be taken for a Communication or landing.”

Sir *John Mordaunt* here observed, That those Hints proceeded from his pressing Sir *John Ligonier* to give him a positive Order; which, he said, he could not do, but would give him his Thoughts.

Major General *Conway* confirms the Circumstance of Sir *John Mordaunt* pressing Sir *John Ligonier*, in his Presence, and expressing a great Desire, in so particular a Case, to have a positive Order.

Vice Admiral *Knowles* being questioned by the Board, Whether he knew of any Proposal having been

been made for attacking Fort *Fouras* by Sea at any Council of War, or Meeting?

Answered, He cannot particularly charge his Memory, but knows very well Sir *Edward Hawke* asked his Opinion about it, and said, The Pilot of the *Magnanime* had told him, that a Ship could go within a small Distance to batter it; and Sir *Edward Hawke* directed his Secretary to begin an Order directed to him, Vice Admiral *Knowles*, for the *Barfleur*'s being lightened for that Service; the *Barfleur* drawing near two Feet less Water than the *Magnanime*.

When he returned on board his own Ship, he sent for Captain *Graves*, who commanded the *Barfleur*, to acquaint him with the Order Sir *Edward Hawke* had given him: Captain *Graves* answered him, That the Ship was on Ground where she laid, and he might look at her, for the Water had ebbed away a Foot from her; and she then laid between four and five Miles distant from the Shore; he acquainted Sir *Edward Hawke* with this, who suppressed the Order; but directed him to try to carry the Bomb-ketches in. He did so, and one of them which drew but eleven Feet Water ran a-ground at a greater Distance from *Fouras* than the Bombardier could throw the Shells with the greatest Requisite of Powder; the Flight of which he knows, at an Elevation of forty-five Degrees, will go two Miles and two Thirds; the Bombardier threw several Shells; whilst the Bomb-ketch laid ashore, two large Row-Boats with two Pieces of heavy Cannon in their Prows, attacked the Ketch, (full of Men each) upon which he (the Vice Admiral) made a Signal immediately for all the Boats in the Fleet, manned and armed, to go to the Ketch's Assistance; and went himself on board the *Coventry* Frigate to drive away the Row-Boats, which Frigate ran a-ground five Times considerably within the Space of an Hour, and at greater Distance from the Shore than the Bomb-ketch. He then sent his Master on sounding; and by the Bearings of the several Places

at which he took his Soundings, it appeared there were but six Feet Water at high Water, two Miles off the Fort.—He added, that he will venture to say, even if Frigates could have got to it, the Fort would have been attacked by Sea.

Being asked, What kind of Landing there was at *Chatelaillon* Bay for Boats?

Answered, He was not there, but refers to Rear Admiral *Brodrick*.

Asked, at the Desire of Sir *John Mordaunt*, What Day the Experiment was made against *Fouras*?

Answered, He is not certain of the particular Day; it was two or three Days after taking the Isle of *Aix*, if not four.

Rear Admiral *Brodrick*, being questioned by the Board, Whether he knows of any Proposal being made for attacking Fort *Fouras* by Sea?

Answered, He never heard it proposed; he was on a different Service.

Q. Whether he heard any Captain offer to undertake it?

A. He thinks he did in private Conversation hear a Captain say, he would undertake it, but no such Proposal was ever made to him, as Admiral.

Q. What kind of landing there was for Boats at *Chatelaillon* Bay?

A. It is a very fair, firm, sandy Bay; a Bay where, in his Opinion, he could get out of the Boat without wetting his Shoes.

Q. How near to the Shore could [the Men of War come?

A. By the Soundings he had, not nearer than two Miles.

Q. Did he observe either Troops, or Batteries, to obstruct the landing, had it been attempted soon after his Return from the Soundings?

A. He saw some Troops, when sounding, about 400 or 500 Foot, and 150 Horse, to the best of his Judgment.—As to Batteries, he had several Shot fired at him whilst he was sounding; but at the Place where

where the Troops were to land, no Shot could have reached the Boats.

Q. What did he observe as to the Nature of the Country near the Shore?

Q. There were Sand-Hills the greatest Extent of the Bay, about forty Yards from the high Water Mark.

Q. (At Sir John Mordaunt's Desire) Could not Bombs have reached the Troops behind the Sand-Hills?

A. He believes the Bomb-Ketches could have been of Service to annoy the Troops, if they could have come near.

Q. Might not several Winds have detained the Fleet in *Basque* Road?

A. He refers to the Council of War, (in like Manner with Vice Admiral *Knowles*) saying, That the same Wind, which would have prevented the Troops from reembarking, would have detained the Squadron there.

Q. As the Works of *Aix* were demolished, the Wind was then fair, and the Fleet wanted at Home, was it not, in his Opinion, advisable to sail on the Return to *England*?

A. His Opinion was never asked; but had he been called upon, he should certainly have been of Opinion for the Fleet to have sailed, upon a Supposition of no Land Operation being to be undertaken.

Sir John Mordaunt was here referred to, at the Desire of Major General *Conway*, lest any Doubt should be entertained of his Proposal having been given in, who said, the Propofal was delivered in, as mentioned in Major General *Conway*'s Narrative.

Colonel *James Wolfe* was questioned by the Board, What is his Opinion of the Practicability of landing Troops between *Rockelle* and *Fort Fouras*?

A. He saw the Bays upon the 29th *September*, and has a Minute of the Report he made, which he laid before the Board.—His Opinion is, It was very practicable in the great Bay of *Chatelaillon*; the lesser Bay

he

he did not see much of. — The Minute by him delivered being read, was to the following Effect ; That
 ‘ he was sent with Colonel *Howard* and Lieutenant
 ‘ Colonel *Murray* by Sir *John Mordaunt*, the 29th,
 ‘ to view the Bay of *Chatelaillon*, and their Report,
 ‘ as far as he can recollect, was to this Purpose,
 ‘ That they did not see any Batteries, Redoubts, En-
 ‘ trenchments, or Troops, to prevent their landing
 ‘ in the great Bay ; but that the Sand-Hills were
 ‘ high enough to conceal the Motions of an Enemy.
 ‘ They were informed by the Captain of the *Viper*,
 ‘ whose Ship anchored nearest the Shore, that a
 ‘ Number of Men had been seen working in the
 ‘ Sand-Hills for some Days. There were six Pieces
 ‘ of Cannon upon the Point of *Chatelaillon*, and
 ‘ small Guards and Posts along the Shore of the
 ‘ lesser Bay.’

Q. Could the Boats have gone out of the Reach
 of the six Pieces of Cannon ?

A. Yes.

Q. Had he been ordered to attempt landing at any Time with all the Men the Boats would have contained, did any such Difficulties appear to him, as would have justified him in representing against it as rash, or impracticable ?

A. Had he been ordered to do it, he should not have represented against it. He observes, he did not see the Bay till the 29th.

Q. Did he ever propose to go out reconnoitring before that Time ?

A. He can't particularly recollect : He looked upon it to be more immediately the Duty of his Office, as Quarter-Master-General, and was ready to go, whenever ordered.

Q. Does he know any Thing relative to Fort *Fouras* on the Land-side ?

A. Only from viewing it through Glasses from the Isle of *Aix*.

Q. How far is it, as he apprehends, from the great Bay of *Chatelaillon* by Land to Fort *Fouras* ?

A. He

A. He can't well say, he never was within the Bay; it may possibly be seven or eight Miles, but the guess is quite vague.

Q. How far from the Landing-place to *Rockefort*?

A. He knows nothing of it, but has been told it is about twelve Miles from the great Bay; about four Leagues.

Q. During the march from the Landing-place to *Rockefort*, might a Detachment sent to *Fouras* of 400 or 500 Men in his Opinion have taken it?

A. He don't know the Strength of *Fouras* sufficiently to answer that Question.

Q. If the Troops had been in Possession of Fort *Fouras*, would not a Retreat have been secured?

A. He supposes it might, but can't speak with any Certainty, or Precision.

Q. What does he take to have been the Strength of *Rockefort* from the best Intelligence he could get?

A. He knows nothing of *Rockefort*; nor did he get any Intelligence concerning it.

Q. (At Sir *John Mordaunt's* Desire) Whether he heard Major *Desbrisay* speak of any Troops marching down, which he imagined were coming from the Isle of *Rhé*?

A. Yes, on the 24th in the Morning Major *Desbrisay* came on board the *Ramilles*, and addressing himself to him, (Colonel *Wolfe*) asked him, whether he should make a Report of what he had seen, viz. a Body of Troops marching towards the Shore from that Part of the Continent opposite to the Isle of *Rhé*; he said, he had also seen a Vessel go backwards and forwards, which he supposed had carried the Troops over, but did not mention the Numbers. He thereupon advised Major *Desbrisay* to go down and make his Report to Sir *John*, in the hearing of the Admiral.

Colonel *Howard* was asked, by desire of Sir *John Mordaunt*, whether he (Sir *John*) did not desire him, as soon as ever the Isle of *Aix* was taken, to pick up

up all the Intelligence he could from the Prisoners?

A. Yes, in Consequence of which he spoke to several, particularly to some of the *French* Officers; but no satisfactory Answer was got from them. He knows likewise some were spoke to by Major-General *Conway*, and some were sent for on the *Saturday* to be examined on board the Fleet.

Major-General *Conway* said, he did speak to several.

Captain *Patrick Tonyn* being asked, at Sir *John Mordaunt's* Desire, what Orders Sir *John* gave him the Morning before the Council of War of the 25th on board the *Neptune*?

Answered, That Sir *John* came to him on the Quarter-Deck, and told him, some Prisoners were to come on board, and if there were any Soldiers, Serjeants, or Corporals, among them, directed him to collect what Intelligence he could by Bribes, offering them forty, fifty, or Sixty Guineas. The Prisoners came on board, but were most of them Labourers and Masons.—He questioned several of them, but they could give him no Intelligence, as they were pressed from a distant Part of the Country. There was a Soldier, or two, of the Regiment of *Poitou* amongst them, Militia, but they could give him no Information.—This he reported to Sir *John*.

Lieutenant-Colonel *Robert Clerk*, chief Engineer upon the Expedition, was questioned by the Board, whether he had ever been at *Rocbefort*?

A. Yes, in *April 1754*.

Q. Had he then an Opportunity of making any Remarks on the Strength and Situation of it?

A. Yes, his Letter to Sir *John Ligonier* particularly describes it, to which he refers,—(being of the Number of Papers transmitted by Mr. Secretary *Pitt*, and which were read at the Outset of the Inquiry.)

Q. Is *Rocbefort* situated on a Flat, an Eminence, or a Declivity?

A. That Part next the River is flat and low, but it rises on the Side next the Land.

Q. Is the Ditch round *Rocbefort* level with the River at High-Water Mark, or is any of it higher than the River?

A. A great Part is higher than the Tide can flow to.

Q. If any Part of the Fosse is higher than the River, can that Part be filled with Water?

A. It cannot.

Being desired to give a Description of the Strength and Situation of *Rocbefort*; he referred again to his said Letter to Sir *John Ligonier*, which was read to him.

He desired to make one Observation (in Regard to an Opinion which had prevailed, that his being permitted by the Governor to see *Rocbefort* was in friendship, or particular favour to him) that he was intirely unacquainted with Mr. *Macnamara*, who was the Governor at that Time; and believes, he would have shewn the same Indulgence and Civility in every Respect to any Officer in Regimentals.

Q. Whether he has received any Information since to induce him to believe *Rocbefort* was stronger at the Time of this Expedition, than when he was there?

A. No, he has several Reasons, which induce him to believe, it was in the same Condition when they came into the Bay.

Being desired to mention those Reasons, he said, that the Day after the Council of War of the 25th, hearing there had been some Difficulties, he went to pass a Day with some of the principal French Officers in the Fort in the Isle of *Aix*. There were present the Engineer, the commanding Officer of the Marines, and the Commander of the Troops, with two or three other Officers of the Regiments. At first he examined two or three of them in regard to the Condition of some of the Places upon the Coast, and particularly *Rocbefort*. He got at first no satisfactory Answers; upon which he resolved to pass the whole

whole Day with them. After Dinner he mentioned to the Company, that two or three of them had been very cautious of giving any Account of their Places, which he believed he knew as well as themselves : Upon which he took out his Pencil, and drew a Sketch of *Rochelle*, describing particularly its weak Sides, and then entered upon a particular Description of *Rockefort*. He then took the Engineer along with him to walk round the Fort, and desired him to tell him, if the Place (meaning *Rockefort*) was not as he described it, telling him besides, that there had been a Dispute between him and one of his Friends, who had it, by hearsay only, (that the Water could be thrown round the Town ; he said, that it was impossible upon account of the Inequality of the Ground, and that he (Lieut. Col. Clerk) gave a more particular Description of *Rockefort*, than he could do himself, though he had been often there ; but he had not examined it with great Attention, having always looked upon it as an open Place.---On the 30th at Night he went to the Isle of *Aix* with Colonel *Wolfe* on purpose to endeavour to make the Engineer say the same thing before him, as he had only mentioned it afore in private ; he brought him to Colonel *Wolfe*, and asked, whether, or not, the Ditch could be made wet and Water thrown round the Town ? his Answer was, that it could not be upon Account of the Unevenness of the Ground ;--- his precise Words in *French* were, “ *Ce ne scauroit être, a cause de l'inégalité du Terrain.*”

Another Circumstance is, that on the 28th of September, 1757, after the Council of War had come to a Resolution to land, he was on board the *Ramillies*, when Captain *Hamilton*, Aid de Camp to Major-General *Conway*, told him, there was a Fisherman, a very sensible Man in his Opinion for a common Man, who had been at *Rockefort* the 21st, and had been since taken Prisoner, and examined by Major-General *Conway*. He got Captain *Hamilton* to shew the Fisherman to him immediately, and asked him a great

many Questions in regard to the Place ; who seemed to be very distinct in regard to many particular Circumstances ; for so common a Man, much more than he could have imagined ; he mentioned particularly that he went by *Rochefort* on the 21st of the Month, and that the Place which he Lieutenant-Col. *Clerk* had described to him as open and unfortified, was in the same Condition that Day. He asked him the Question several Times before many People, and particularly before Colonel *Wolfe* :---He had never seen the Man before.

A third Circumstance is, that upon the Voyage home on board the *Royal George*, where were some *French* Prisoners, he found among them a Mason, who had been employed at *Rochefort* about two Years, and enquired of him, if any of the Gates were upon a Level with the Ground, without any Bridge : He said, there was one, but that it had a very good strong Gate. The Reason of his asking that Question, was, that if Water could be thrown round the Town, there must have been a Bridge in his Opinion. This passed before Captain *Buckle* of the *Royal George*.

Since his Return to *London*, he has seen several People, who have been at *Rochefort*, and particularly Mr. *Plenderleith*, a Merchant, who was at *Rochefort* about 14 Months ago ; and he confirmed him in this Particular of the Inequality of the Ground, and in every other Respect regarding the Place. This Mr. *Plenderleith* lived, for many Years, a Merchant at *Rochelle*, and he, Lieutenant-Colonel *Clerk*, knew him when he was there.

Major-General *Conway* said, that he examined several Persons, twenty at least, and therefore cannot particularly recollect, whether the Fisherman mentioned in Lieutenant-Colonel *Clerk*'s Evidence was one ; but if the Name was mentioned, he should perhaps remember,---and Lieutenant-Colonel *Clerk* thereupon mentioning, that he believes *Boneau* was the same, Major-General *Conway* referred to a Minute, which

which he took of one *Boneau* of *L'Isle Dieu*, which is as follows :

“ *Boneau de L'Isle Dieu* was at *Rochefort* on *Wednesday*; does not know what Number the Garrison: “ believes great Part came out to the Coast and Batteries, since we came.---Town not very strong he thinks, but a good Rampart, and a *Ditch* full of “ *Water* all round.---That he saw it so.

“ 11 Battalions at *Rochelle*. More on the *Isle of Rhé*, “ several at *Oleron*.---Saw seven at *Rochelle* eight Days “ ago—*Water* over against *Fouras* at half Cannon— “ shot four Fathom—Many Batteries on the Coast— “ Some Sand, but most muddy—*Isle de Rhé* good “ landing—*Sand* at *Flat* near the *Shore*.”

Major-General *Conway* added, if this was the same Man (which he could not pretend to affirm) the Man was sometimes clear, and sometimes very indistinct.

Lieutenant-Colonel *Clerk* said, the Man gave him an indistinct Account about the *Ditch*; and believes it to be the same Man.

Captain *William Hamilton* being called upon, at the Desire of Lieutenant-Colonel *Clerk*, said, he heard Lieutenant-Colonel *Clerk* ask the Man many Questions, and amongst others particularly as to the Side next the River, whose Answer was, Every Thing remained in the same Situation as before, and open.

Sir *John Mordaunt* observed, that *Boneau*, (if it is the same) was examined almost a whole Day before the Council, and he was so very indistinct and unsatisfactory, that the Council was quite out of Patience with him.

Lieutenant-Colonel *Clerk* desired leave to remark, that though one cannot expect to have any distinct or satisfactory Account from a Fisherman, or any common Man, in regard to a Fortification, and that one must even look for Contradictions in some Things, yet one may depend for a particular Circumstance upon a Man of that Kind, very nigh as much as upon an Engineer.

Being asked, by desire of Major-General *Cornwallis*, when he had collected what passed, whether he acquainted the Commander in Chief of the *English Forces* with that Conversation?

Answered, He did acquaint Sir *John Mordaunt* with it the next Day in the Morning (being the 27th, the Day before the Order for Landing) and Major General *Conway* likewise, when they were walking at the Top of the Donjeon over the Gateway in the Isle of *Aix*, and mentioned particularly, that he had passed the Day with the People of the Fort, and particularly with the Engineer, on Purpose to examine him with regard to *Rockefort*; and that he had confirmed every Thing he, Lieut. Colonel *Clerk*, had said: And remembers particularly Sir *John Mordaunt's* Answer, That no Credit could be given to what a *French* Engineer said on that Subject; and asked, if he was in that Situation, whether he would have explained any thing on such a Subject? His Answer to Sir *John Mordaunt* was, " Different Men had different Characters; for his Part he believed him."

Sir *John Mordaunt* said, he remembers Lieut. Col. *Clerk's* acquainting him with this Circumstance of the Engineer, and his making that Observation upon it.

Major General *Conway* desired, it might be observed, that his two Proposals came on that very Day, and the Council was called that Night, which came to the Resolution of Landing. He added, that he tried the Engineer, but without getting any thing from him.

Sir *John Mordaunt* said, that if he understood Lieut. *Nethercote* rightly yesterday, the Engineer told him quite the reverse; — and Lieut. *Nethercote*, of the Royal Regiment of Artillery, being thereupon questioned, said, That he did speak with the Engineer at the Isle of *Aix*, but had no particular Conversation with him about the Ditch at *Rockefort*, or the Place; but the Engineer gave him prevaricating Answers, and he did not chuse to proceed with him.

Lieut.

Lieut. Colonel *Clerk* being asked, at Major General *Conway's* Desire, Whether he offered, or hinted at any Consideration to the Engineer ?

Answered, No, never any ; he industriously avoided that ; but explained, that in Discourse he entered into their Affairs, thinking thereby to make them more free and open ; and finding the Engineer, and one or two others, were likely to be ruined, unless they were soon released, he promised to use his Influence to get them released, as soon as they came to *England*.

Q. Did the Engineer give any other material Information about Troops, or otherwise ?

A. No ; he once threw it out to them, but he found, they shunned it.

Q. Did he ask the Engineer concerning the Troops after the Information given him in regard to *Rockefort* ?

A. What he asked as to the State of their Troops was, to the best of his Knowledge, after the Information given him in regard to *Rockefort* ; but the Engineer shunned giving an Answer, upon which he dropped it.

Being asked by the Board, whether he knows any thing of the Strength of Fort *Fouras* towards the Land ?

Answered, It appears by his Letter, he never had seen the Fort ; and at the Council of War he told them, he had then never seen the Land-side of it.

Q. Did he see any Obstruction to landing the Troops in the Bay of *Chatelaillon* ?

A. None ; when he reconnoitred with Major General *Conway* on the 29th ; for he does not reckon the Cannon *en barbette* upon the high Bluff Point of *Chatelaillon* any Obstruction at all, as the Captains of the Men of War had remarked in their Report of the 24th.

Q. (By Desire of Major General *Conway*.) Did he hear him make his Report to Sir *John Mordaunt* ?

A. He heard a good deal of it ; he thinks not

the whole, but believes it to have been conformable to what he has now said.

Q. Does he remember the Fort, or Cannon, upon the high Ground, on the other Side of the Fort *Fouras*?

A. He did not observe it himself; he knows Major General *Conway* mentioned it.

Q. (From the Board.) If Fort *Fouras* could not be taken, what Method would he have taken to secure a Retreat?

A. By making an Intrenchment at *Chatelaillon* to secure the two new Battallions, which he understood were to have been left there.

Sir *John Mordaunt*, after remarking that these two Battallions consisted intirely of new-raised, raw, and undisciplined Men, desired Lieut. Colonel *Clerk* might be asked, If an able Engineer had been at *Rockefort*, with a sufficient Number of Men and Tools, how long would he have been in making the Opening spoken of equally secure against a *Coup de Main* with the rest of the Works?

To which he answered, That it is very difficult to ascertain any thing of that Kind with Precision, and that no Conclusion can be drawn from what may be done; for what may be done, very seldom is done---even in *France*.

Q. (At the Desire of Major General *Conway*.) What Time it would take to throw up an Intrenchment of a strong Profil in that yielding Sort of Ground, such as he threw up in the Isle of *Wight*, with as many Hands, as could be employed?

A. Though this depends very much upon the Nature of the Ground, so that sometimes a particular Spot takes double the Time of what a most able Engineer could determine at first (the particular Case of the Lines thrown up at the Island at the Entrance of *Portsmouth*, by Captain *Demeré*, having taken him five Times more Time than he expected) as for the Intrenchment thrown up in the Isle of *Wight*, he believes it may be thrown up in a Day and half, or perhaps

perhaps even in a Day, with as many Hands as could be employed upon it.

Q. Does he not think that Ditches and the morass Ground would be an additional Strength at the Opening of *Rochefort* ?

A. To be sure they would.

Q. Were there not Ditches already cut, that would be an Impediment ?

A. Yes.

Q. Does he not think Moon-light Nights would be a great Impediment to an Assault ?

A. Believes the Moonlight could be no such Impediment, as to hinder the Place from being carried in a couple of Hours.

Q. (*From the Board*) If, contrary to his Expectations, *Rochefort* had been too strong to have been taken by a *Coup de Main*, could not the Store-houses and Magazines have been burnt by throwing of Carkasses and red hot Balls ?

A. Undoubtedly, by Carkasses and Shells one might destroy a great many of the Stores ; but to do it in any tolerable degree, would require five times the Number of what they had with them ; and that such a Method would both take up Time, and there would likewise be great difficulty in bringing up sufficient Stores for that Purpose to the Place.

Major General *Conway* desired leave to produce a Minute of an Examination of a *French* Prisoner taken before Sir *John Mordaunt*, which was read, *viz.*

“ *Pierre Girard de Rochefort*, Sailor, who says, “ they have worked at *Rochefort* this Fortnight past ; “ that he has seen new Works ; that they had work- “ ed at the Ditch and at *Souterrains*. ”

At Sir *John Mordaunt*’s Desire, who said he had lately received Information of a Letter found in the Isle of *Aix*, the Postscript whereof he conceived material, as it shews Precautions were taken at *Rochefort*, Mr. *John Eiser*, Engineer, produced a Letter as found by him in a Room belonging to a Priest in the Isle of *Aix*, without Cover or Superscription, the Day after

the

the Fort was taken, dated, " *A Rochefort ce 18,*" (the Month and Year not specified) the Postscript whereof is as follows.—" *Je vous prie d'assurer Monsieur & Madame le Comte de mon respect ; il conjecture que la Saison est trop avancé pour que les ennemis entreprennent rien sur nos Costes, mais la precaution de Monsieur le Gouverneur n'en est pas moins bonne.*"

Lieutenant Colonel Clerk said, That besides the Particulars he has before-mentioned, he met with another Circumstance that confirmed him in his Opinion about *Rochefort*, and that before he left *England*,—which is a Relation of the Port of *Rochefort*, printed in 1732. That Book gives a very clear Account how it comes to be in the Condition he has represented.—*Colbert*, who was Prime Minister of the *Finances*, intended, that there should be nothing but a simple Wall round *Rochefort*, that no Garrison of regular Troops might be put in it, on purpose to prevent Disputes between Land and Sea Officers. The Governor built a Rampart in the same Form as he supposes the simple Wall was intended ; that is to say, with Redans, than which nothing can be more absurd. *Signellai* disgraced the Governor upon that Account ; tho' the Author takes his Part, and says, he followed the Plan of an Engineer.

Sir John Mordaunt begged leave to refer to an Examination taken by his Secretary Captain *Richard Davenport*, of *Pierre Girard*, Mariner, one of the French Prisoners, which being produced by the said Captain *Davenport*, was read as follows.—" *Pierre Girard*, Mariner, says, That he is well acquainted with *Rochefort*, and was there on the 20th ; that there is a Ditch round the Place, of which two Thirds are full of Water, and the other Third may be filled at pleasure ; that the Avant Guard is fortified and defended by a fascine Battery of several Pieces of Cannon just finished."

Robert Boyd, Esq; Comptroller of the Train, by direction of the Board, laid before them an exact Account

count of the Proportion of Brass Ordnance, Howitzers, Mortars, and Stores furnished from the Ordnance for this Expedition.

Sir John Mordaunt then addressed himself to the Board as follows,

“ I am conscious of having done my utmost to the best of my Judgment for his Majesty’s Service in the Conduct of this Expedition ; and I have submitted myself voluntarily and readily to this Examination. I desire no Favour or Partiality, and I know I shall have the most exact Justice in the Report this honourable Board will make.

“ I apprehend, that an Inquiry into the whole Conduct of an Expedition, without any Accusation formed, or any Charge laid, is a Proceeding not quite common ; and however free from Guilt a Man may feel himself, there are few who can stand so strict an Examination.

“ There is nothing but the high Opinion I have both of the Justice and Candour of this Board, could make me easy in such a Situation.

“ I therefore hope you will be indulgent to my Errors ; but I desire no Mercy for Guilt or known Disobedience, and with these Sentiments I submit myself to the Court.”

No Person having any thing farther to offer, all Parties were directed to withdraw,—when the Board proceeded to take the whole Matter before them into Consideration ; and after some Time,

Adjourned to Thursday next at 11 o’Clock in the Forenoon.

At a Meeting of the said General Officers, &c. (pursuant to Adjournment) on *Thursday* the 17th of November 1757.

The Board took into farther Consideration the several Matters before them relative to the Failure of the late Expedition, and came to several Resolutions ; which they directed to be stated in a Report to his Majest-

Majesty, and a Draught thereof to be prepared and laid before them at their next Meeting.

Adjourned till Monday the 21st Instant, at 11 o'Clock in the Forenoon.

At a Meeting of the said General Officers, &c. on Monday the 21st of November, 1757.

The following Report to his Majesty, prepared agreeable to the Resolutions of the Board at the last Meeting, being laid before them, was approved and signed.

of *May it please your Majesty,*

WE the underwritten General Officers of the Army, in Obedience to your Majesty's Warrant, which bears Date the 1st Day of this present Month, commanding us strictly to examine into the Causes of the Failure of the late Expedition to the Coasts of France, and to report a State thereof, as it should appear to us, together with our Opinion thereupon, have, at several Meetings, perused and considered your Majesty's Orders and Instructions, as transmitted to us by the Right Honourable Mr. Pitt, your Majesty's principal Secretary of State, together with sundry Letters and other Papers therewith transmitted, and have heard and examined Lieutenant General Sir John Mordaunt, the Commander in Chief of the Land Forces, and other principal Officers employed on the said Expedition, with such Witnesses as either of them desired, and also such other Persons as seemed to us most likely to give any material Information; and in order that your Majesty may be fully possessed of every Circumstance, which has appeared in the Course of this Inquiry, we beg Leave to lay before your Majesty the whole of our Examination, as contained in the Minutes of our Proceedings to this our Report annexed: And upon the most diligent and careful Review of the whole Matter, we do, in farther Obedience to your Royal Command, most humbly report to your Majesty

jesy the principal Causes of the Failure of the said Expedition, as they appear to us, *viz.*

It appears, that one Cause of the Expedition having failed, is the not attacking Fort *Fouras* by Sea, at the same Time that it would have been attacked by Land, agreeable to the first Design, which certainly must have been of the greatest Utility towards carrying your Majesty's Instructions into Execution. It was at first resolved by Sir *Edward Hawke* (*Thierry* the Pilot of the *Magnanime* having undertaken the safe Conduct of a Ship to Fort *Fouras* for that Purpose) but afterwards laid aside, upon the Representation of Vice-Admiral *Knowles*, that the *Barfleur*, the Ship designed for that Service, was on Ground, at the Distance of between four and five Miles from the Shore; but as neither Sir *Edward Hawke*, nor the Pilot, could attend to give any Information upon that Head, we cannot presume to offer any certain Opinion thereupon.

We conceive another Cause of the Failure of the Expedition to have been, that, instead of attempting to land, when the Report was received on the 24th of September from Rear-Admiral *Brodrick* and the Captains, who had been sent out to sound and reconnoitre, a Council of War was summoned and held on the 25th, in which it was unanimously resolved not to land, as the Attempt upon *Rochefort* was neither advisable nor practicable; but it does not appear to us, that there were then, or at any Time afterwards, either a Body of Troops or Batteries on the Shore, sufficient to have prevented the attempting a Descent, in pursuance of the Instructions signed by your Majesty: Neither does it appear to us, that there were any sufficient Reasons to induce the Council of War to believe, that *Rochefort* was so far changed in respect of its Strength, or Posture of Defence, since the Expedition was first resolved on in *England*, as to prevent all Attempts of an Attack upon the Place, in order to burn and destroy the Docks, Magazines,

Arsenals,

Arsenals, and Shipping, in Obedience to your Majesty's Commands.

And we think ourselves obliged to remark upon the Council of War of the 28th of *September*, that no Reason could have existed sufficient to prevent the Attempt of landing the Troops previous to that Day, as the Council then unanimously resolved to land with all possible Dispatch.

We beg Leave also to make one other Observation, that after its being unanimously resolved to land in the Council of War of the 28th, the Resolution was taken of returning to *England*, without any regular or general Meeting of the said Council: but as that whole Operation was of so inconsiderable a Nature, we do not offer this to your Majesty as a Cause of the Failure of the Expedition, since we cannot but look upon the Expedition as having failed, from the Time the great Object of it was laid aside in the Council of War of the 25th.

All which is most humbly submitted to your Majesty's Wisdom.

Privy-Garden,
21st November, 1757.

MARLBOROUGH.
GEORGE SACKVILLE.
JOHN WALDEGRAVE.

A true Copy,
CHARLES GOULD,
Deputy Judge-Advocate-General.